## CLAIMS

1. A method of generating a search result list substantially in real time in response to a search request from a searcher using a computer network, comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of search listings, wherein each search listing is associated with a bid amount and a search term;

receiving a search request from the searcher;

identifying the search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

ordering the identified search listings into a search result list in accordance with the values of the respective bid amounts for the identified search listings;

receiving a retrieval request from the searcher to retrieve information associated with a search listing in the search result list; and

recording a retrieval request event in database corresponding to the searcher's apostrophe retrieval request.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of updating a search listing in the search listing database in response to a request from a network information provider.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of including on the search result list search listings having a bid amount of zero.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the account database comprises at least one account record for each of a plurality of network information providers, said account record including

at least one search listing having a search term and a bid amount,

an account balance; and

a unique account identifier.

5.      The method of claim 4, wherein the search listings in the account record are organized into at least one subaccount within the account record.

6.      The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of including on the search result list search listings having a bid amount of zero.

7.      The method of claim 4, wherein the retrieval request event comprises the search term and the bid amount of the search listing, and an account identifier associated with the search listing.

8.      The method of claim 7, wherein the retrieval request event further includes a rank value.

9.      The method of claim 7, wherein the retrieval request event is linked to the account record having an account identifier that corresponds to the account identifier listed on the retrieval request event.

10.     The method of claim 9, wherein the bid amount of the retrieval request event is charged to the account balance of the account record having an account identifier that matches the account identifier of the retrieval request event.

11.     A method of generating a search result list substantially in real time in response to a search request from a searcher using a computer network, comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of search listings, wherein each search listing is associated with a bid amount and a search term;

receiving a search request from the searcher;

identifying the search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

ordering the identified search listings into a search result list in accordance with the values of the respective bid amounts for the identified search listings;

receiving a retrieval request from the searcher to network information associated with a search listing in the search result list; and

estimating the cost of a search listing for a specified time period upon receiving a request from a web site promoter.

12.    The method of claim 11, wherein the estimated cost of a search listing for the specified time period is calculated as a product of the current bid amount of the search listing and a projected number of times the search listing is selected by a searcher within a specified time period.

13.    A method of generating a search result list substantially in real time in response to a search request from a searcher using a computer network, comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of search listings, wherein each search listing is associated with a bid amount and a search term;

receiving a search request from the searcher;

identifying the search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

· ordering the identified search listings into a search result list in accordance with the values of the respective bid amounts for the identified search listings;

receiving a retrieval request from the searcher to network information associated with a search listing in the search result list; and

generating a search listing activity report including information on retrieval requests received from searchers during a specified time period.

14.    A method of generating a search result list substantially in real time in response to a search request from a searcher using a computer network, comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of search listings, wherein each search listing is associated with a bid amount and a search term;

receiving a search request from the searcher;

5 identifying the search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

ordering the identified search listings into a search result list in accordance with the values of the respective bid amounts for the identified search listings;

10 receiving a retrieval request from the searcher to network information associated with a search listing in the search result list; and

suggesting alternative search terms to the searcher for generating additional search result lists related to the searcher's search request.

15 15. A method of enabling a network information provider to update information relating to a search listing on a search result list generated by a computer network search engine, comprising the steps of:

maintaining an account database having at least one account record for each of a plurality of network information providers, said account 20 record including

at least one search listing having a search term and a bid amount; and

an account identifier;

receiving from a network information provider a change request 25 for a search listing in the network information provider's account;

updating the search listing in the network information provider's account record in response to the change request; and

determining a position substantially in real time for the updated search listing in a search result list generated by the search engine in 30 response to a search request received from a searcher using the computer network, where the search term of the updated search listing generates a

match with the search request and the position of the updated search listing in the search result list is determined using the bid amount.

16.    The method of claim 15, where the search term of each search listing in the search result list generates a match with the search request.

17.    The method of claim 16, wherein the search listings in the search result list are sorted in order of decreasing bid amount.

18.    The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of assigning an ordinal rank value to each search listing in the search result list in order of decreasing bid amount, with the smallest rank value assigned to the search listing in the search result list having the highest bid amount, and the largest rank value assigned to the search listing having the lowest bid amount.

19.    The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of
        determining creation time value for each search listing in the account database;
        identifying search listings within a search result list having equivalent bid amounts; and
        within a group of search listings within a search result list that have equivalent bid amounts, sorting the search listings in order from earliest to most recent creation time value.

20.    The method of claim 15, wherein the account record further includes an account balance.

21.    The method of claim 20, wherein the account balance is positive.

22.    The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of subtracting the bid amount from the account balance substantially in real time when a search listing is selected by the searcher from the search result list.

23.    The method of claim 20, where the search listing further comprises a web site title, a web site description, and a web site Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

24.    The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of recording a retrieval request event substantially in real time when a search listing is selected by a remote searcher from the search result list.

25.    The method of claim 24, wherein the retrieval request event comprises an account identifier, and a bid amount.

26.    The method of claim 25, wherein the retrieval request event further comprises a search term.

27.    The method of claim 25, wherein the retrieval request event further comprises a web site URL.

28.    The method of claim 25, wherein the retrieval request event further comprises a rank value.

29.    The method of claim 25, further comprising the step of applying a charge to an account balance, where the charge corresponds to a bid amount recorded in a retrieval request event having an account identifier that matches the account identifier corresponding to the account balance.

30.    A method of enabling a web site promoters using a computer network to update information relating to a search listing within a search result list generated by a search engine substantially in real time in response to a search request received from a remote computer over the computer network, comprising the steps of:

maintaining an account database having at least one account record for each of a plurality of web site promoters of the computer network, said account record including an account identifier, and at least one search listing having a search term and a bid amount;

providing the web site promoter with authenticated login access, wherein the web site promoter's login access permits the web site promoter to modify the web site promoter's account record;

modifying a search listing of the account record upon receiving a request from said web site promoter; and

generating a search result list comprised of search listings wherein the search term for each search listing generates a match with the search request, the search listings in the search result list arranged in an order corresponding to the bid amounts of the search listings.

31.    The method of claim 30, wherein the search result list further includes at least one search listing having a bid amount of zero.

32.    The method of claim 30, wherein the search result list further includes at least one search listing that is not included in the account database.

33.    The method of claim 30, wherein the step of modifying the search listing of the account record upon receiving a request from the web site promoter is performed substantially in real time.

34.    The method of claim 30, wherein the search listing further includes a title, a description, and a Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

35.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of adding a search listing substantially in real time to an account record of a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

36.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of deleting a search listing substantially in real time from an account record of a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

37.    The method of claim 30, wherein the account record further comprises an account balance.

38    The method of claim 37, wherein the account balance is positive.

39.    The method of claim 37, further comprising the step of adding substantially in real time a money amount to the account balance of the web site promoters upon receiving a request from the web site promoter.

40.    The method of claim 39, wherein the money amount has been verified by an external financial authorization network.

41.    The method of claim 30, wherein the search term and the search request each comprise at least one character string.

42.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of generating an activity report for a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

43.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of estimating a cost of a search listing for a specified time period upon receiving a request from a web site promoter.

44.    The method of claim 43, wherein the estimated cost of a search listing for the specified time period is calculated as a product of the current bid amount of the search listing and a projected number of times the search listing is selected by a searcher at a remote computer in a specified time period.

45.    The method of claim 30, wherein the bid amount of a web site promoter's search listing comprises a money amount that is deducted from the account balance of said web site promoter's account each time the search is selected by a remote searcher.

46.    The method of claim 30, wherein the search listings of the web site promoters in the search result list are sorted in decreasing order from highest to lowest bid amounts.

47.    The method of claim 46, wherein an ordinal rank value is assigned in ascending order to each search listing of the search result list in the sorted order starting at the search listing with the highest bid amount, which is assigned the smallest rank value, and ending with the search listing with the lowest bid amount, which is assigned the largest rank value.

48.    The method of claim 25, further comprising the step of displaying data from the search result list at the remote computer.

49.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of generating a search listing activity report.

50.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of suggesting alternative search terms for the creation of new search listings upon the request of the web site promoter.

51.    The method of claim 30, wherein said computer network is the Internet.

52.    A method of enabling a web site promoter using a computer network to update information relating to a search listing within a search result list generated by an Internet search engine, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining a database having at least one account record for at least one web site promoter using the computer network, said account record including:

at least one search listing, where each search listing includes a search term field having at least one keyword, a bid amount, a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) corresponding to the address of a document residing on a network web server, a description, and a title ;

an account balance;

payment processing information for the web site promoter , said payment processing information maintained isolated from public access via the computer network; ·  ··

payment histories of the web site promoter; and

search listing histories of the web site promoter;

providing the web site promoter with login access in response to authentication, wherein the web site promoter's login access permits the web site promoter access to modify the web site promoter's account record, the web site promoter not being provided with access to modify account records of others;

modifying substantially in real time the search listing of a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter;

receiving a search request, the search request including at least one keyword, the search request being received over the Internet from a searcher at a remote computer; and

generating a search result list in response to the search request, the search result list including search listings of the account records on the computer network, wherein the search term field for each search listing in the search result list generates a match with the search request, the search listings in the search result list arranged in an order determined using the bid amounts of the search listings.

53.    The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of adding a search listing substantially in real time to an account of web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

54.    The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of deleting a search listing substantially in real time from the account record of a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoters.

55.    The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of adding a money amount to the account balance of a web site promoter substantially in real time upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

56.    The method of claim 55, wherein the money amount has been verified by an external financial authorization network.

57. The method of claim 52, wherein the keyword comprises a character string.

58. The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of generating an account activity report for a web site promoter upon receiving a request from said web site promoter.

59. The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of estimating a cost of a search listing for a specified time period upon receiving a request from a web site promoter.

60. The method of claim 59, wherein the estimated cost is calculated as a product of the bid amount of the search listing and a projected number of times the search listing is selected in the specified time period.

61. The method of claim 52, wherein the bid amount of a web site promoter's search listing comprises a money amount that will be deducted from the account balance of said web site promoter's account each time the search listing is selected.

62. The method of claim 52, wherein the rank value is an ordinal value.

63. The method of claim 52, wherein the search listings of the search result list are sorted in decreasing order from highest to lowest bid amounts.

64. The method of claim 63, wherein a rank value is assigned to each search listing of the search result list in the sorted order starting at the search listing with the highest bid amount, which is assigned the smallest rank value, and ending with the search listing with the lowest bid amount, which is assigned the largest rank value.

65. The method of claim 64, further comprising the step of displaying data from the search result list at the remote computer.

66.    The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of generating a search listing activity report.

67.    The method of claim 52, further comprising the step of suggesting alternative search terms upon the request of the web site promoter.

68.    A system for enabling an advertising web site promoter using a computer network to update information relating to a search listing within a search result list generated by an Internet search engine comprising:

a computer system having stored thereon

a database having at least one account record for each of a plurality of advertising web site promoters using the computer network, the account record including:

at least one search listing including a search term having at least one keyword, a bid amount, a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) corresponding to the address of a document residing on a network server, a description, and a title;

an account balance;

a history of search listings included in the advertising web site promoter's account record;

payment processing information, wherein said payment processing information is accessible to the computer system and isolated from public access via the computer network; and

a payment history;

programming code for providing the advertising web site promoter with login access in response to authentication, wherein the advertising web site promoter's login access grants the advertising web site promoter access to modify the advertising web site promoter's account, the advertising web site promoter not being provided with access to modify the accounts of others;

programming code on said computer system for adding money to the account of an advertising web site promoter in substantially real time upon receiving a request from said advertising web site promoter;

programming code on said computer system for adding a search listing to an account of an advertising web site promoter in substantially real time upon receiving a request from said advertising web site promoter;

programming code on said computer system for deleting a search listing to an account of an advertising web site promoter in substantially real time upon receiving a request from said advertising web site promoter;

programming code on said computer system for modifying in substantially real time the search listing of an advertising web site promoter upon receiving a request from said advertising web site promoter;

programming code for generating in substantially real time an activity report for an advertising web site promoter upon receiving a request from said advertising web site promoter;

programming code for receiving a search request from a remote computer, the search request including at least one keyword, the search request being received over the computer network from the remote computer through a web site that is publicly accessible without authentication; and

programming code for generating in substantially real time a search result list in response to the search request, the search result list including search listings from the accounts on the database, wherein the search term for each search listing in the search result list generates a match with the search request, the search listings in the search result list arranged in an order determined using the bid amounts of the search listings.